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1973/02/18

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Actions MD 978520
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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Chou En-lai, Premier, State Council
Chi P'eng-fei, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs
Chang Wen-chin, Assistant Foreign Minister, Acting Director of American Pacific Affairs Department
Wang Hai-jung, Assistant Foreign Minister
T'ang Wen-sheng, interpreter
Shen Jo-yun, interpreter
Two Chinese notetakers
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff
Alfred Le S. Jenkins, Department of State
Winston Lord, NSC Staff
Peter W. Rodman, NSC Staff
Miss Irene G. Derus, Notetaker

PLACE: Great Hall of the People, Peking, China

DATE AND TIME: February 18, 1973, 2:43 p.m. - 7:15 p.m.

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PM Chou: Now there are two other matters I would like to discuss with you. One is Cambodia. Because it seems this time during this visit it will be difficult to make further progress. We know your ideas. You are more clear about our position. We gave you the documents in English and French. We gave you already the 5-point statement of March 23, 1970, and also the January 26, 1973, but we should further give you the January 23 one of the three Vice Ministers of the Royal Government of National Union in the interior part of Cambodia. And we are in agreement with Vietnam in respecting the position of the Front of National Union of Cambodia and also the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia. Our tendency would be that you should cease your involvement in that area. Of course you would say in reply that other parties should also stop their involvement.

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That is right.

PM Chou: If it was purely a civil war the matter would be relatively more simple. Of course it wouldn't be easy to immediately confine it to a civil war. The situation would be like China in the past. Of course it is not possible to hope for Cambodia entirely copying the previous China situation. But one thing can be done, that is, we can talk in various ways to make your intention known to the various responsible sides in the National United Front of Cambodia. Because the National United Front of Cambodia is not composed of only one party; it also is composed of the left, the middle and the right.

Of course, Samdech Norodom Sihanouk wishes to be in a central position, as is the King of Laos and Prime Minister Phouma. They actually now have two leading persons; one is the head of state, the other is the Prime Minister, Penn Nouth. Of course in the interior the strength of the left is larger. And we also believe that differences will also occur in the Lon Nol clique.

France is also active, and so is the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is also attempting to fabricate their own Red Khmer but they can't find many people. But it might in the future appear. So, in the future, if there is some information you would like to give us in this respect, we can also give you some too. But it would only be information. It would not be -- we have not yet reached the stage where we could provide any views or suggestions.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand.

PM Chou: And we would like to take very prudent steps, because we wish to see the final goal of Cambodia realized; that is, its peace, independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Dr. Kissinger: We completely agree with these objectives.

PM Chou: But we will still have to wait and see in which way these objectives can be realized. And you know, and Samdech Norodom Sihanouk also knows, that we would never want to turn Samdech Norodom Sihanouk into someone who would heed to our beck and call. If we did that, that would be like hegemony. Many of the views he expresses in our People's Daily are not necessarily our views, but we give him complete freedom. Although he has written songs about nostalgia about China -- in Peking he wrote a very good poem about China being his second motherland -- and although he is writing such poems we do not cherish illusions. I was going to try to persuade him not to try and publish the second song. I advised him to use "homeland" because "motherland" was too excessive. He insisted on "motherland". We must be prepared for the day when he says it doesn't count! Anyway it was all written by him; it has nothing to do with us. Of course he is now saying I am one of his best friends, that I am one of his best friends, "as Mr. Mansfield is." It doesn't matter. That is only personal

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relations. He is still the Head of State of the Buddhist State of Cambodia. So we still have to wait and see the developments of that issue.

So if we wish to see Southeast Asia develop along the lines of peace and neutrality and not enter a Soviet Asian security system, then Cambodia would be an exemplar country.

Dr. Kissinger: We are in complete agreement with that objective. And we have the same difficulty determining in exactly which direction to put our influence.

PM Chou: We still have to study that problem.

Dr. Kissinger: We are prepared to exchange information. It would be kept in strictest confidence. And we also believe. . .

PM Chou: Anyway I believe you to a certain degree answered me, when I said about the fact that Lon Nol will not do. I do not mean that the forces that he represents do not count.

Dr. Kissinger: I understand that. But before one can act on that, one has to have some idea of the alternative. I also agree that if it can become a Cambodian civil war rather than a foreign war, that would be the first step toward realizing these objectives.

PM Chou: We understand the directions. We understand our respective orientations. Because it is impossible for Cambodia to become completely red now. If that were attempted, it would result in even greater problems. It should be settled by the United Front, on the basis of the policy I just now mentioned; that is, independence, peace, neutrality, unity and territorial integrity.

Dr. Kissinger: Those principles we agree with, and we now have to find some framework for achieving them in a way that takes account of all the real forces.

PM Chou: So, one we agree.

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